

Case 2673

***Micropterus patachonicus* King, 1831 and *Anas pteneres* Forster, 1844 (both currently in *Tachyeres* Owen, 1875; Aves, Anseriformes): proposed conservation of the specific names**

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Abstract. Steamer ducks are large diving ducks of southern South America, classified today in the genus *Tachyeres* Owen, 1875. There are four species, three of them flightless. Usage of the names of two of the species is threatened by the unused senior name *Oidemia patachonica* King, 1828: *T. pteneres* (Forster, 1844) as a subjective synonym and *T. patachonicus* (King, 1831) as a secondary homonym.

1. During the surveying voyages of the British ships *Adventure* and *Beagle* during 1826–30, Captain P. P. King observed steamer ducks, and an unknown number of skin specimens were collected. In February 1827, King and members of the parties aboard the two ships made an excursion to Eagle Bay, Straits of Magellan, and collected specimens of an apparently flightless species (King, 1839, p. 35).

2. In July 1827, King sent from Rio de Janeiro a selection of 78 specimens, many of which were believed to represent new species, to N. A. Vigors, Secretary of the Zoological Society of London, in advance of the return of the expedition (King, 1828a, pp. 422–423). Among these skins was a single specimen of a large duck which King thought was new and which he named (King 1828b, p. 100) as *Oidemia patachonica*.

3. The collection of specimens also contained examples of another species which were smaller and more red on the scapulae and throat and in 1831 (p. 14) King named it as a new species, *patachonicus*, of *Micropterus* Lesson, 1828 (p. 416). Specimens of this second species were exhibited at a meeting of the Zoological Society of London in December 1830. In 1839, King (p. 542) mentioned that this species was capable of flight, thereby starting a century-long debate concerning the existence of both flighted and flightless species of steamer duck (see Cunningham, 1871, p. 493; Lowe, 1934). The species is currently known as *Tachyeres patachonicus* (*Tachyeres* Owen, 1875, p. 254, is the replacement name for *Micropterus* Lesson, 1828, preoccupied by the fish name *Micropterus* Lacépède, 1802). *T. patachonicus* King, 1831 is a junior secondary homonym of *Oidemia patachonica* King, 1828, which is also now placed in *Tachyeres*.

4. Subsequently, King (1839, pp. 35 and 542) concluded that the specimen he had named *Oidemia patachonica* corresponded closely with a flightless duck described from the voyage of the French vessel *Uranie* by Quoy & Gaimard in 1824 (p. 139) under the name *Anas brachyptera* Latham, 1790 (p. 834) (later placed in the genus *Micropterus*). King indicated the synonymy of his species with *M. brachypterus* (as then understood) and this was noted by Strickland (1841, p. 39) and Gibson (1877, p. 185). Eventually,

brachypterus was restricted by Murphy (1936, p. 954) to the flightless species endemic to the Falkland Islands, King's Magellanic species being separated as *Anas* (now *Tachyeres*) *pteneres* (Forster, 1844, p. 338). *T. pteneres* is the name in use today, although *O. patachonica* is the older synonym.

5. I recently examined the extant specimens from the original collection of King in the National Museums of Scotland (NMSZ 1926.109.111) and the British Museum (Natural History) (BMNH Old Vellum Catalogue No. 42-73b), which have been regarded as "co-types" of *Oidemia patachonica* (Stenhouse, 1929, p. 185; 1930, p. 274 (where the catalogue number of the former specimen is incorrectly cited as 1926.109.90 (R. McGowan, pers. comm.)); Warren, 1966, p. 221; Warren & Harrison, 1973, p. 5) and determined that both are of the Magellanic flightless species (inferred earlier for the former by Gibson, 1877, p. 185). No original material of the flighted species collected by King is known to exist.

6. Since King's 1839 publication the specific name *patachonicus* King, 1831 has been used to refer to the flighted species in over 200 ornithological works spanning 150 years, and in papers by both proponents and opponents of according species status to the flighted form; these include Murphy (1936, p. 968), Meyer de Schauensee (1970, p. 33) and Livezey & Humphrey (1986, p. 540). A representative list of a further five references is held by the Commission Secretariat. The only possible exception to the usage of *patachonicus* was the parenthetical suggestion of the alternate name *Micropterus macropterus* by Giglioli (1875, p. 934) for the flighted species; this was an informal, descriptive proposal without nomenclatural justification and Giglioli otherwise used *patachonicus* and cited only King's second paper (1831) in reference to the flighted form.

7. The fact that the name *patachonicus* was used by King for different species in 1828 and 1831 appears to have been overlooked by all but Stenhouse (1929, p. 185), who also mentioned the possible availability of the name suggested by Giglioli. There is variation, however, in the reference given for the name as used in its current (1831) sense; for example Murphy (1936, p. 968) and Delacour (1954, p. 276) both credit King, 1830 (sic, for 1831), whereas Weller (1976, p. 45) and Johnsgard (1979, p. 453) refer to King, 1828.

8. In order to maintain the usage of *Tachyeres patachonicus* in its accustomed (King, 1831) sense for the flighted species of steamer duck, I propose the suppression of *Oidemia patachonica* King, 1828 as a senior secondary homonym of *Micropterus patachonicus* King, 1831 and as a senior subjective synonym of *Anas pteneres* Forster, 1844.

9. The International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature is accordingly asked:

- (1) to use its plenary powers to suppress the specific name *patachonica* King, 1828, as published in the binomen *Oidemia patachonica*, and all other uses of the name prior to the publication of *patachonicus* King, 1831, in the binomen *Micropterus patachonicus*, for the purposes of both the Principle of Priority and the Principle of Homonymy;
- (2) to place on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology the following names:
 - (a) *pteneres* Forster, 1844, as published in the binomen *Anas pteneres*;
 - (b) *patachonicus* King, 1831, as published in the binomen *Micropterus patachonicus*;

- (3) to place on the Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Specific Names in Zoology the name *patachonica* King, 1828, as published in the binomen *Oidemia patachonica*, and as suppressed in (1) above.

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